

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Symonds Bell, 1877, with transcript

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his Parents. (Latter part of March or first of April) Boston, Sunday, 1877. Dear Papa and Mama:

I hope to be with you — if only for a few hours — some time next week. I am anxiously waiting directions from Titusville. My salary, etc., all depends upon my ability to demonstrate the feasibility of talking by telegraph — to the satisfaction of certain capitalists in the oil regions. I cannot by any means feel sure of anything telephonic. I have met with so many disappointments already — that I shall believe in my salary when I see it — and not before.

I do not see at all why I should lose the opportunity of making some money by lecturing now. “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” — I have accepted two invitations in the neighbourhood of Boston — one in Lowell about 25 miles away and the other in Providence, Rhode Island — 45 miles distant.

A gentleman — Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. in New York — says he could make engagements for me that would net me “several thousand dollars in a few weeks” — I have not accepted yet as I do not know what Titusville is going to do.

I was in Providence, Rhode Island when your last letter came and had the opportunity of experimenting on both the Western Union and Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph Company's wires. About 9:30 p. m. last Saturday a wire was brought from the Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph Company's office right in to the private 2 editorial rooms of the “Providence Press” and I tried an experiment in the presence of the Editor of the Press and the

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Manager of the Telegraph Company. Mr. Watson's voice came out loudly and clearly from the instrument although 43 miles of wire intervened between his mouth and my ear — and although the battery had been entirely removed from the circuit. He opened and read my letters to me through the wire — the Report of Sir William Thomson which gained me my diploma at the Centennial — among the rest.

I expect the Diploma and Medal will soon make their appearance also and then I shall hope to hear something of the Diploma and Medal for Visible Speech.

By the bye a great and unexpected honour has just befallen me. I have been informed by Prof. Soudder that at the last meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences a number of names were balloted for to fill a vacancy in the department of Physics and Natural Philosophy. The Society is very exclusive and the number of members is limited. As the members die off others are elected to fill their places.

Some two or three months ago my name had been presented to the Academy by Prof. Putnam for the next vacancy and I was balloted for with others last week. Prof. Peirce — the astronomer — made a speech in my favour and the result was I was elected by a full vote of 19 ballots — 13 ballots having been the largest ballot cast for months before. Among those black-balled was the son of J. Quincy Adams — the venerable President of the Academy — so that I have every 3 reason to believe that my election is a very great triumph indeed. I have not yet received official notice of my election but I have received the congratulations of a number of friends on my success and I feel quite elated at having reached — what has been for the last two years — the summit of my ambition.

As a “Fellow of the Academy of Arts and Sciences” — I can bring out my ideas upon gravitation etc., in a manner calculated to arrest the attention of the leading scientific men of the world — and I shall be brought into direct personal contact with the leading thinkers of this country.

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You have asked many times about “Mr. Watson.” You will have the opportunity of seeing him for yourselves next week.

Don't you think you could get up a lecture for us in Brantford that would pay our expenses.

I might lecture in Brantford and Mr. Watson operate the instruments in Paris. Or you could arrange for two lectures to be delivered simultaneously — one in Brantford by me and the other in Paris by Mr. Watson.

You could arrange with one of the Telegraph Companies for the use of a line for the occasion. No battery will be required. All we want is a clear line right into the hall. I shall telegraph to you what day we shall be in Brantford and if you care to arrange for a lecture — do so.

In great haste.

Your loving son, Alec. Mr. A. Melville Bell, Brantford, Ont.